

# IUD (Intrauterine Device)

## Where can you get an IUD?

An IUD requires an exam and insertion by a qualified doctor or health care provider. Call your local family planning clinic for information.

## How the IUD works:

An IUD/IUS (intrauterine device or intrauterine system) is a small plastic device that is inserted into your uterus by a trained doctor or health care provider. When it is in place, the IUD appears to work primarily by stopping sperm from reaching the egg. It can also stop a fertilized egg from implanting into the uterine lining.

Two types of IUDs are available in the United States. The copper IUD causes a change in uterine and tubal fluids so that the egg does not get fertilized. Progestin IUDs have a hormonal method of action: the cervical mucus thickens, preventing the sperm from getting into the uterus and reaching the egg.

## How to use the IUD:

IUD insertion is done by a specially trained doctor or health care provider. The IUD can be inserted at any time during the menstrual cycle. Ask your health care provider for more information. The IUD can be inserted after childbirth, or within 3 weeks of an abortion. Ask your health care provider for more information about the timing of insertion.



### Center for Health Training

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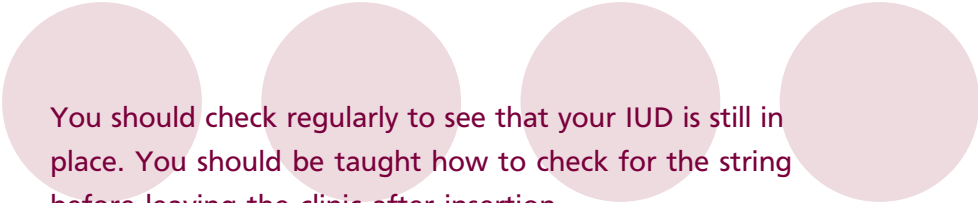
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You should check regularly to see that your IUD is still in place. You should be taught how to check for the string before leaving the clinic after insertion.

### **Effectiveness rates:**

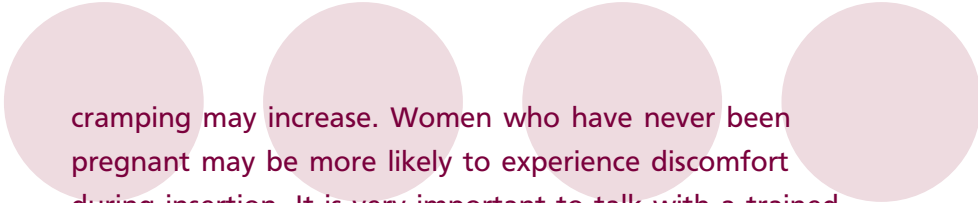
The IUD/IUS devices are very effective methods of birth control. Among women who use the IUD perfectly (checking strings regularly to see if it is still in place) the effectiveness rate during the first year of use is 99.4% (copper) and 99.3% (progestin). Typical use is 98-99%. One to two women (or fewer) out of 100 might become pregnant within the first year of using an IUD.

### **Benefits of the IUD:**

The IUD offers long-term protection. For some women it is a very easy, safe and effective method of birth control. The copper IUD also offers protection against ectopic pregnancy.

### **Potential side effects and disadvantages:**

Menstrual periods (bleeding) may be longer. But women who use the IUS device report a decrease in blood flow. Some women may get anemic when they bleed heavily. Spotting may occur between periods. Other women may experience lighter periods or no periods at all. Menstrual



cramping may increase. Women who have never been pregnant may be more likely to experience discomfort during insertion. It is very important to talk with a trained doctor or health care provider about the potential side effects with either the IUD or IUS.

Using the IUD or IUS will not give you protection against HIV (AIDS) or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as chlamydia, herpes, genital warts, gonorrhea, hepatitis B and syphilis.

### **Potential risks:**

The risk of developing pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) is related to 1) the IUD insertion and 2) any exposure to sexually transmitted infections. PID is the infection of the uterus, fallopian tubes and the ovaries. Untreated or recurring PID can lead to infertility (difficulty getting pregnant). A woman who wishes to have children in the future may not want to risk an infection with an IUD. With severe PID, and an IUD left in place, death can occur. Women who have had PID, gonorrhea, or chlamydia or who have more than one sexual partner, or partners who have other sexual partners, are at greater risk of getting PID.

If pregnancy does occur, the IUD should be removed immediately. There is some risk of ectopic pregnancy with the IUD/IUS. Sometimes an IUD comes out by itself, but this is very rare.

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